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SUBJECT: WATER: GOI FEARS LACK OF PWA MAINTENANCE WILL  
EXACERBATE WEST BANK SHORTAGES

¶1. (SBU) Keying on the April 2009 World Bank Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development and in anticipation that water issues may be raised at the June 8-9 Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC) meeting, Lt. Col. Uri Singer, COGAT Deputy Foreign Relations Head called in EconCouns for a June 1 discussion of West Bank water issues. Singer noted that Israel has fulfilled its water obligations to the PA under the Oslo Accord. However, he said poor maintenance and mismanagement of existing facilities by the Palestinian Water Authority are worsening the already serious drought-induced shortages. Singer cited five of eight water wells in Palestinian-controlled areas A and B that are non-operational because the PWA did not maintain them; the result is that the eight million cubic meters of water that these wells should be producing are not being pumped and distributed to the Palestinian people. He also raised lax enforcement against illegal tapping of distribution systems and inadequate maintenance of distribution networks as serious issues that the PWA must address. Finally, Singer noted that Ramallah residents are receiving one-third less water than they should because the PWA installed-pipes were the wrong size for the Ramallah network.

¶2. (SBU) Singer criticized the April 2009 World Bank Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development's assessment of progress--or the lack thereof--regarding developments to meet future needs. The report cites 82 wells for which "the Palestinians ... have lodged an application" (paragraph 94 of the report, as well as Annexes), of which "to date, only three have been developed...however, these wells have never operated." Of these 82, Singer said, only 24 are in Area C, i.e., under Israeli Civil Administration control. Of those 24, three were approved by the Civil Administration; two applications were received in April/May 2009 and are currently under review; 17 were approved in concept, but the PWA has not yet submitted plans for approval; one plan was returned to the PWA for technical modifications, but was never resubmitted; and one was rejected on May 17th because it would service homes built illegally in Area C. (NOTE: Prior to the release of the World Bank report, the Government of Israel raised specific objections, (embassy has a copy) but these were not reflected in the published report. According to Singer, in post-publication discussions, the World Bank's David Craig offered to revise the annexes, but not the text that referred to the annexes, a proposal which the GOI found insufficient. END NOTE).

¶3. (SBU) Singer explained, "the PWA is politically motivated, not job-oriented," and politics are negatively impacting the PWA's ability to distribute water to West Bank residents. He warned that the PA needs to remedy as many of these problems as possible as soon as possible, or this summer's water shortages will undermine public support for the PA, a situation Singer said the GOI wants to avoid. Singer urged that donors place an emphasis on technical assistance on

maintenance in upcoming contributions, preferably by linking  
equipment and parts donations to training and scheduled  
maintenance requirements.

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